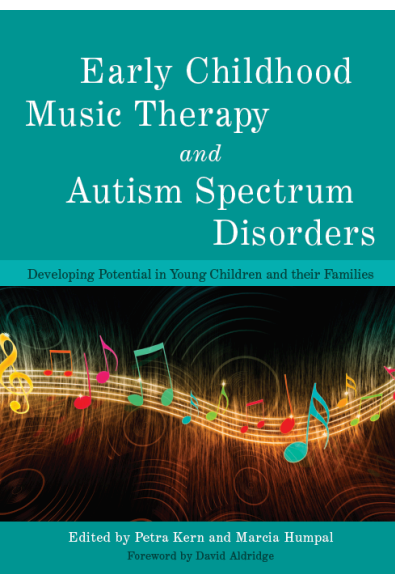# reviews

Kern, P. & Humpal, M. (Eds.) (2012). *Early childhood music therapy and autism spectrum disorders: Developing potential in young children and their families.* Philadelphia and London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 304 pages. ISBN: 978-1-84905- 241-2. $39.95

This book is written by some of the most prominent clinicians and researchers in the field of music therapy. Co-edited by Petra Kern and Marcia Humpal, this publication offers the most current view of music therapy in early childhood and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice. It provides a broad overview of recognized treatment approaches for children with ASD including applicable research substantiation. A detailed summary of music therapy intervention research that supports evidence-based treatment modalities is provided. Clinical examples shared by the authors further demonstrate the practical applications of music therapy interventions designed to meet the needs of this population. Information on the assessment process, effective strategies and service delivery is also included. The book concludes with a wealth of resources including websites, books, research, and technology.

This book is divided into five parts that include Introduction and Research, Assessment and Goals, Treatment Approaches, Collaboration and Consultation, and Selected Resources. Within each part, authors have contributed chapters that detail music therapy practice of the highest standard as it relates to the most effective means of supporting learner outcomes. Each chapter concludes with review questions assisting the reader in understanding critical elements of the information provided.

In **Part 1,** the authors provide a comprehensive overview of ASD including core characteristics, diagnosis and interventions. Evidence-based practice is defined and discussed with implications for the practice of music therapy. Specific treatment approaches that have been identified as EBP by national organizations are provided along with examples of supporting music therapy research. The authors emphasize that whether the service is consultative or direct, music therapists need to make well-informed practice decisions. To this end, Kern has outlined a five-step process for making informed clinical decisions based on current research.

Part 2 provides information on music therapy assessments including a rationale for conducting assessments and an overview of many of the tools currently in use for children with ASD. The authors focus on three models used in special education settings designed to 1) determine eligibility, 2) provide information about student needs and strengths, and 3) help generate treatment goals. An overview of each model is given with

clear steps for implementing the tool, interpreting the results, and developing appropriate goals based on the data. While these assessments are non-standardized, the authors who have developed these tools have used them successfully in their respective school districts to provide a consistent rationale for recommending music therapy services for their students with ASD.

Treatment approaches that are described in **Part 3** include Applied Behavioral Analysis, Social Stories™, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, and DIR®/Floortime™ model. The underlying principles for each of these approaches are explained and the clinical process is outlined by each respective author. Case vignettes and specific song strategies clearly illustrate the goals and the therapeutic environment unique to each approach. A discussion of supporting research and future directions also are included. The editors conclude this section with examples of strategies and techniques used in EBP that should be considered when designing interventions for young children with ASD. Particular attention is given to organizing the learning environment, supporting language with alternative modes of communication, and promoting peer interaction.

In **Part 4,** the reader learns how collaborating with professionals and family members increases understanding of the whole child and enhances music therapy practice. Chapter 10 takes the reader through the process of referral, assessment, program implementation, and termination of music therapy services for a child in an inclusive childcare program. Specific scenarios describe the importance of collaboration with both the family and the interdisciplinary team to determine the type of service delivery and treatment plan that will best meet the developmental needs of the student. In Chapter 11 the author gives a thorough overview of research related to speech and language deficits as well as a description of effective behavioral techniques developed to improve language learning. Finally, she emphasizes the importance of communicating with speech and language pathologists and other team members to assure effective collaboration and learning across environments. Chapter 12 provides the reader with a clear understanding of sensory processing challenges and their impact on learning and behavior. Examples of evidence-based

strategies are cited that can be used to facilitate participation in daily routines as well as ideas for collaboration between music therapy and occupational therapy to develop interventions that meet sensory needs and maximize learning. Chapter 13 identifies specific behavioral, communication and sensory challenges that impact the home environment and offers tips to parents for effectively using music strategies to help manage those challenges. Chapter 14 includes interviews with parents who describe what living with ASD has taught them about advocacy, hope, partnership, support and love. Hearing their stories strengthens our own insights and compassion, increasing our effectiveness as helping professionals.

Finally, in **Part 5**, the co-editors provide the reader with a collection of resources including a list of professional organizations, technology tools for clinical application, and an annotated bibliography.

Early Childhood Music Therapy and Autism Spectrum Disorders is a book whose importance cannot be overestimated in light of today's focus on ASD and evidence-based practice. It is a rich resource that challenges readers to increase their knowledge of the treatment approaches that are currently supported by research, examine their work in light of the evidence supporting specific modalities, and inform their own practice accordingly. Petra Kern and Marcia Humpal have provided us with a book that is balanced, well informed and critical to our understanding of the young child with ASD.

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About the Author

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